

When and how politicians take ‘scandalous’ decisions?

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Abstract We study the decisions of a politician who maximizes his probability of being re-elected, which depends on the enactment of legislative instruments defined ‘scandalous’ because of their highly redistributive content. The agents are a politician and the voters; the legislative instruments available to the legislator are ordinary and executive laws, which differ according to their visibility. The theoretical model predicts that ‘scandalous’ legislation tends to be passed at the beginning of the legislature, while ‘non scandalous’, broader legislation, is approved mostly at the end of the legislation. Scandalous decisions, moreover, tend to be implemented by means of less visible executive legislation, while ordinary acts are mainly used to implement non scandalous decisions. This explanation of the genesis of legislation cycles is consistent with the findings of the empirical literature.

Keywords Legislation cycle · Ordinary legislation · Executive legislation · Redistribution

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